

DATE: 9 Nov 1971


TO: Mr. John Negroponte  
NSC Staff

FROM:

SUBJECT:

REMARKS:

Attached is the draft of a cable I  
proposed to send to Saigon per our  
8 November 1971 conversation. Will  
you please let me know if the language  
meets with your approval.

  
George A. Carver, Jr.  
Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

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MATTER OF US PRESS POSTURE IF THERE SHOULD BE PRISONER RELEASE/EXCHANGE ARRANGED VIA [ ] CONTACT HAS BEEN CAREFULLY WEIGHED HERE. FOLLOWING IS GUIDANCE AND INSTRUCTIONS AS RECEIVED FROM WHITE HOUSE:

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1. OUR BASIC POLICY WILL BE TO SAY AS LITTLE AS POSSIBLE, FIELDING QUESTIONS BY TAKING LINE THAT PRISONER ISSUE IS CLEARLY DELICATE SUBJECT WHICH WE PREFER NOT TO DISCUSS IN ORDER TO AVOID SAYING ANYTHING THAT MIGHT PREJUDICE OTHER US PRISONERS' CHANCES OF RELEASE. UNSTATED BUT CLEARLY IMPLIED PITCH SHOULD BE THAT NEITHER US NOR GVN PLANS TO GIVE OUT FURTHER FACTS (FOR ABOVE REASON), HENCE ANY STORIES FILED WILL PERFORCE BE AMALGAM OF RUMOR AND SPECULATION. JOURNALISTS (PRESS, RADIO, AND TV) AND EDITORS WILL HAVE TO LET THEIR OWN CONSCIENCES DECIDE WHETHER BYLINE, STORY, OR PRIME-TIME SPOT WARRANTS RISK OF PROLONGING THE CAPTIVITY OF OTHER US PERSONNEL.

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2. ON SPECIFICS, IF [ ] (AND/OR OTHERS) RELEASED, THIS CLEARLY NEITHER CAN NOR SHOULD BE CONCEALED. WE SHOULD ALSO ACKNOWLEDGE FACT THAT THERE WAS AN EXCHANGE, MADE POSSIBLE THROUGH APPRECIATED COOPERATION OF THE GVN. WE SHOULD NOT, REPEAT NOT, IDENTIFY OR DESCRIBE ANY COMMUNIST PRISONERS EXCHANGED BY NAME, FUNCTION, OR PRESUMED IMPORTANCE. WE SHOULD MENTION, HOWEVER, BARE FACT THAT US AND GVN ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO RESPOND TO PRISONER RELEASE ACTIONS BY THE OTHER

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SIDE, AS THE RECORD OF OUR JOINT ACTIVITY IN THE PAST AMPLY  
DEMONSTRATES. US AND GVN, IN FACT, HAVE DONE CONSIDERABLY  
MORE IN THIS HUMANITARIAN SPHERE THAN THE COMMUNISTS HAVE.

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3. FINALLY, [ ] AND/OR ANY OTHER US PERSONNEL RE-  
LEASED SHOULD BE URGED, ADVISED, OR (WHERE POSSIBLE) INSTRUCTED  
TO KEEP QUIET ON AND PLEAD IGNORANCE OF CIRCUMSTANCES RELATING  
TO THEIR OWN RELEASE IN ORDER TO AVOID HARMING THE CHANCES OF  
THOSE STILL IN COMMUNIST CAPTIVITY.

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